

## St Anthony's School farewells beloved Principal of 9 years

Few careers span generations of school communities, and even fewer leave such a lasting impact!

Principal Martin Wilkie officially retired Week 2 Term 2, bringing the curtain down on a remarkable 44-year legacy with Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE). Including nine years leading one of BCE's largest primary schools, St Anthony's School, Kedron.

Martin's story is one that has grown steadily over time. Raised on a dairy farm, he learned early the value of hard work, consistency and showing up every day, lessons that clearly paid dividends across a long and fruitful career.

As a former BCE student and with a mother who was an educator, it seems teaching was always in his blood, making his path into Catholic education less of a career choice and more of a 'calling.'

In this Q&A, Martin looks back on the people, places, and moments that made his time in Catholic education so rewarding.

### **Q: What impact do you think you've had in your current role?**

A: Since I have announced my retirement, I have had the wonderful experience of having so many current and past students, parents and staff come up to me to thank me for making a real difference in their lives. I have truly been humbled by this experience.

### **Q: Why did you decide to become an educator?**

A: I grew up on a dairy farm in the Scenic Rim and I soon realised that farming life wasn't for me!

My mother had been a teacher before she got married (to a dairy farmer)! So, I think she was one of my main influences in my decision to become a teacher.

### **Q: What has changed since you were at school?**

A: Growing up on a dairy farm meant a daily commute into the town of Beaudesert. This meant a twice daily ¼ mile walk to the farm gate and then a 30-minute bus ride. The bus didn't drop the Catholics off outside our school, so we had to walk from a neighbouring street. My primary school years were spent at St Mary's School, Beaudesert (attending from 1966 to 1972). This was the school I returned to for my first six years of teaching.

Large classes were the norm in the 1960s, with up to 40 students in a class and only one stream of each class. It's hard to believe I am retiring from a large metropolitan school with five streams of Prep and Year One alone and almost 700 students!

### **Q: What has been the most memorable part of your career?**

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A: One of my most memorable times in my career was my first appointment as a Principal at St Elizabeth's School, Tarragindi where I got engaged, married and proudly become the father of twin boys over the course of the first two years of my Principalship.

I will never forget how the community celebrated every milestone with celebration and fun!

## **Q: How did you balance work and your life, raising three children as a Principal?**

A: We were fortunate that my wife was a teacher too, so we had every holiday period together. Even though I missed every one of their 'first days' at school due to my responsibilities, I was always able to make it to other school events. The boys understood the importance of the role and understood that at times, I would not be available. As a Principal, I always prioritised 'family' with the staff. They appreciated this.

I learnt very quickly that there had to be a life outside of work as much as possible! Being appointed Acting Principal at St Elizabeth's School in 1995 following the untimely death of the Principal from a heart attack at his desk was a very early reality check.

## **Q: What advice would you give aspiring Principals?**

A: My advice to aspiring Principals is not to forget that we are there for the students. Over my 30 years as a Principal, I was always a visible presence in the school, being in the playground at almost every break and around before and after school.

Sitting in the office in back to back meetings or dealing with all the administrative tasks could always wait.

## **Q: What are your hopes for the future of St Anthony's School?**

A: I hope St Anthony's continues to flourish and continues its strong partnership with the Franciscan communities of schools here at Kedron, namely Mount Alvernia College and Padua College and the Franciscan Parish of Kedron. We have something incredibly unique here at Kedron with the Franciscan Friars and Missionary Franciscan Sisters still a visible presence in the community. I hope St Anthony's continues to be a highly regarded school in the local area with students excelling academically, socially and spiritually.

## **Q: What message would you like to leave with your students as you retire?**

A: Show your appreciation to your parents and teachers for choosing a Catholic Education. Continue to show everyone that the students of St Anthony's are very fortunate. Continue to be kind and compassionate to others and to grow into outstanding adults.

## **Q: Any other words of wisdom?**

A: As a Principal for over 30 years, my greatest words of wisdom would include "happy staff equals happy school".

I have always endeavoured, to look after the staff and create a positive happy environment. It doesn't matter how much social media marketing a school may have, if you

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have a happy staff, happy families. It's the best form of marketing! The school will market itself!

The school community loves to see the Principal having fun and not taking themselves too seriously. This is one of the best ways to create a positive school community.

I know my wife and I are looking forward to the next cyclone, severe thunderstorm or pandemic knowing that finally I won't have sleepless nights or needing to be at work after-hours and all weekend worrying about all things school.

Finally, after 30 years, I can just look after my own family!

For more information about St Anthony's School, Kedron or to enrol [click here](#).

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